

OZ, YEHOASHUA, AND GROSSMAN: POST-ZIONIST NARRATIVES

By

Copyright 2013

Nitzan Meltzer

M.A., University of Kansas 2013

Submitted to the Department of English and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Cheryl Lester

Chairperson

Byron Caminero-Santangelo

Renee Perelmutter

Date defended April 17th, 2013

The Thesis Committee for Nitzan Meltzer certifies that this is the approved version of the
following thesis:

OZ, YEHOASHUA, AND GROSSMAN: POST-ZIONIST NARRATIVES

Cheryl Lester

Chairperson

April 17th 2013

Date approved

Absract

Ranen Omer-Sherman has called David Grossman, Amos Oz, and A. B. Yehoshua the three most internationally acclaimed Israeli writers. They are also three secular Israeli men who grew up with the State of Israel, and whose writings reflect the changes in prevailing social attitudes throughout its history.

All three authors reveal through their recent work (specifically, novels published in first decade of the 21st century) some aspect of Post-Zionism in literary choices that mark a departure from or a reimagining of the ideologies the modern State was founded upon, and that these authors invariably grew up with. An examination of these Post-Zionist visions is important both in terms of understanding popular cultural trends of the State but also as statements about Israel's place in on a global stage that increasingly contends with questions about the international power structures of the 20th century.

The purpose of my thesis is to examine the ways that these authors challenge traditional representations of institutions of Zionism including the kibbutz and the IDF, and how they give unprecedented voice to the various populations that make up the State today, including Arabs and women. What results is a progressive rather than a destructive secularism, an emerging point of view that post-Zionism can be an inclusive phenomenon, but one that requires critique and redefinition of the varied components of a life in the Holy Land.

Oz, Yehoshua, and Grossman: Post-Zionist Narratives

David Grossman, Amos Oz, and A. B. Yehoshua have been described by Ranen Omer-Sherman as the three most internationally acclaimed Israeli writers. They are also three secular Israeli men who grew up with the State of Israel, and whose writings reflect changes in prevailing social attitudes throughout its history. All three authors reveal through their recent work (specifically, novels published in first decade of the 21st century) a Post-Zionist purview, not in its extreme right wing sense, which refers to the “oppos[ition] to the existence of Israel as a Jewish state,” but in literary choices that mark a secular and inclusive departure from or a reimagining of the ideologies upon which the modern State was founded, and with which these authors invariably grew up. An examination of these Post-Zionist visions is important in terms of understanding popular cultural representations of the evolving secular ideology of the State. It is also significant in terms of what these narratives suggest about Israel’s place on a global stage as it increasingly contends with questions about national power structures of the 20th century.

In choosing to study these authors’ recent texts in their English translations, I hope to establish the relevance of these texts which, through translation, are reaffirmed in terms of their importance within Israeli culture and international Jewry. These translations are also part of a globalizing phenomenon, which allows access to these stories as we acknowledge the “internationalizing moment” happening in academia and beyond. Despite the advanced study of Jewish texts as a category in universities, Israeli texts are underrepresented, proliferating, and part of a different tradition having to do with the unique modern situation of the Israeli subject, who is politically and culturally different than Jews of other nationalities, and who contends with these differences even as the literature he or she produces may fit into a larger Jewish corpus. Post-Zionism especially reflects such a difference, and is an important concept to study

internationally alongside Post-Colonial and Post-National texts that reflect the issues of citizenship and identity that questions of the nation bring to the fore.

The texts in question might not reflect, to an American audience, the kind of departure from Zionist discourse that they may signal to the Israeli reader, and to that end, the exploration of this phenomenon is timely and significant. In addition, Israel as a state is intimately intertwined politically with the US – Jewish opinion is actively fought for and over- and Israel’s politics influence the entire Middle East and beyond. There is an urgency for studying Israeli cultural production and understanding it as both representative of the modern State and as a response, in certain ways, to globalization. Rather than casting Israel as the “other” in need of an analytical lens, I am instead promoting a pluralism in national/cultural studies that acknowledges the importance of this political entity in this historical moment and justifies interacting with its texts in their translations – indeed, asks what is at stake by *not* approaching these important reflections of political rhetoric and culture - which are by and large the primary way that the rest of the world will encounter them.¹

This paper, then, examines the translations for the ways that these authors explore particular “stages” and “scripts” of Zionism, moving, for example, from the Zionist kibbutz, through the IDF and the battlefield and into Arab villages of the Israeli landscape. The writers challenge the traditional ideologies that acts on these stages have represented in the early years of the modern state. They also give unprecedented voice to the various populations, or different

¹ Translation is a subject worthy of future study. There may indeed be significant issues in, for example, the translation of metaphors or other devices, which could significantly impact an analysis of a text. This paper relies on the characters, details, and plot lines that are adhered to faithfully enough that my analyses aren’t troubled by translational choices, but I also make use of metaphor, specifically, war-related metaphors that project the Post-Zionist perspective of Ora in Grossman’s *To the End of the Land*. These have been checked against the original, and are faithfully translated, and I argue that this underscores their significance in the text.

“actors” that make up the State today, including Arabs and women, by offering situations in which the characters take on Post-Zionist positions. What results is a progressive secularism, an emerging point of view that Post-Zionism can be an inclusive phenomenon, but one that requires critique and redefinition of the varied components of a life in the Holy Land². In other words, all three authors present readers with three “institutions” that were founded in Zionism: the kibbutz, the IDF, and the Israeli university, and through the shifting roles of the institutions and the different perspectives of the people inside – and critics outside – of the institutions, the authors hold up the Zionist values upon which these institutions were founded for closer scrutiny, revealing conflicts between ideology and reality, and asking questions through these discursive communities about Post-Zionist roles for institutions and people of the Holy Land.

I open with an introductory section on the varying definitions of Post-Zionism that are currently in use, and attempt to place the authors into this complicated debate. All authors are also active political nonfiction writers, and especially in the case of Grossman and Oz, Post-Zionism manifests itself across genre. As the authors are representatives of a very small segment of Israel’s current population, however it is defined, I plan to discuss their attempts to give voice to other demographics, but to withhold a conclusion about the effectiveness of their approaches until the end. I will go over, briefly, overlapping themes in these authors’ works before beginning an examination of each individual author and his take on one specific transformative platform of Zionism/Post-Zionism and how this is reflected in terms of identity and of land.

Post-Zionism for the purposes of the paper

² I use the term “Holy Land” to refer to the modern State of Israel and all of the territories in which the novels I examine take place. I employ the term to add the connotations that other religious and cultural groups associate with the land to the discussion, which allows me to better describe the kind of inclusive, Post-Zionist environment and citizenship the authors are recognizing and describing.

In order to understand manifestations of Post-Zionism within the texts in question, it is useful to look at Zionism and Post-Zionism as frameworks situated along a continuum upon which we can place certain kinds of narratives. Said describes how

various struggles for dominance among states, nationalisms, ethnic groups, regions, and cultural entities have conducted and amplified a manipulation of opinion and discourse, a production and consumption of ideological media representations, a simplification and reduction of vast complexities into easy currency, the easier to deploy and exploit them in the interest of state policies. 36

In many ways, the narratives of Zionism are an example of such a struggle. Esther Fuchs uses a generational approach to explore narrative as it fits into or resists Zionist frameworks. I place her categories of Palmah generation narratives (including writers like S. Yizhar and Moshe Shamir) and narratives of the Statehood generation along this increasingly self-reflective and critical continuum of Israeli writing. Fuchs notes that in Statehood narratives, the “omniscient narrator of the Palmah Generation was replaced by an unreliable narrator, and the inept, isolated anti-hero” (14), and Oz and Yehoshua are both described as writers of this latter generation. Traditional Zionist or Palmah generation narratives depict the kibbutz and its inhabitants, Sabras, or “New Hebrews,” as masculine, heroic, and unemotional Zionist responses to the feminized Jew of the Old World, maintaining binaries that render Arabs the “other” or the “enemy” of these texts, and depicting the aggression enacted against the other as self-defense. The authors have, for decades, complicated such simple binaries and exposed their ironies.

More than six decades after the establishment of the State of Israel, the current ideological horizon is extremely complex, and it is complicated and controversial to attempt to articulate to what exactly Zionism has given way, to summarize Israel’s new ideological voices.

There is not one particular ideological category that every person involved fits into – it is difficult even to assert that there are two clear-cut categories, or that people generally tend to fit in to one another. In the same way that Fuchs offers a continuum for Israeli narrative, I propose a sort of continuum between the concept of Post-Zionism and Neo-Zionism, along which our authors sit not necessarily together but near each other and closer to the Post-Zionist extreme.

Often, the language of Post-Zionist and Neo-Zionist studies is fraught. Yoav Gelber of the University of Haifa calls Post-Zionism a new form of Anti-Zionism, asserting that Post-Zionists reject the idea of a “Jewish people” and ignore the historical persecution to which Zionism responded as a viable answer. Uri Ram, meanwhile, claims that the idea of a democratic Jewish state was, from the beginning, a “sham” (330). The language used by scholars does not reflect the perhaps more moderate approach taken by the authors, whose adherence to some of the tenets of Post-Zionism does not preclude a belief in, for example, the existence of a “Jewish people,” but rather complicates this concept by presenting readers with a more heterogeneous take on this “group.” This adherence does not, moreover, dismiss the historical circumstances under which Zionism formed. Instead, it suggests that the ideology has changed along with the conditions on the ground today.

A working definition of Post-Zionism for this particular study, then, is imperative in order to understand the authors and their visions of and for the current state. Without suggesting that the two are always in sharp opposition or aligning with the extreme rhetoric of this debate, I will start by drawing from Ram’s definitions, which articulate the positions of Post-Zionism in the ways that it stands as an alternative to Neo-Zionism, both of which he sees as an expression of Post-Nationalist politics in Israel today.

Ram describes the scene as one where Post-Zionists oppose the stances of Neo-Zionists, but it is important to note that in daily practice, people enact a paradoxical mixture of these categories. This is something that is well reflected in all three of the works under investigation in this paper. There are also differing levels of political involvement to take into account, as well as issues of class, education, religiosity, and ethnicity, which all influence an individual's political identity in the modern state (Ram, 330).

As Ram defines it, "Post-Zionism aspires for 'territorial nationalism,' i.e., civility defined by the common life in a specified territorial boundary under a common regime" (406). In Israel, even this is not a straightforward matter, as territorial boundaries are, of course, continuously, disputed on all sides. Ram describes a "normative horizon" of "'Israeli citizenship'" (406), which attempts to resolve the problems that come with a religion-oriented categorization, but even this title is fraught with problems for some who would fit into particular categories if a territory could be defined and agreed upon, but do not personally identify with the titles conferred. And although, for the sake of this paper, I will identify Israel using the political boundaries in place during the first decade of the 21st century (the time of these novels' publications) to talk about the landscapes of these narratives, the authors themselves do much to confound the boundaries, national and personal, among the heterogeneous population of this space at this time.

While Ram sets Post-Zionism in opposition to religiously-inspired Neo-Zionism, critics from the other side including Gideon Katz see "secularists" like Amos Oz as establishing an antithetical relationship between the future of Judaism and its religious past. I argue that the authors actually lie somewhere in the middle of this spectrum of Post-Nationalist ideology. Their work embraces a Post-Zionism that is neither Ramian nor Katzian – that is as complicated and

impossible to fit neatly into popular Post-Zionist binaries as it can only be in its literary manifestation. All of the demographic variations noted above are tackled in the works of Oz, Grossman, and Yehoshua, and I see these complications as a part of their attempts at rendering a Post-Zionist landscape and as commentary about necessary revisions to Zionist notions of citizenship in Israel.

One aspect of Post-Zionism that I believe is reflected in the works of Yehoshua, Oz, and Grossman includes what Ram calls a

trend of libertarianism and openness, which strives to lower the boundaries of Israeli identity, and to include in it all relevant ‘others.’ This trend is fed by, and in turn it feeds, a lower level of regional conflict and a higher level of global integration of Israel. 334

Ram links Post-Zionism with individualism and consumerism as opposed to collectivist mobilization, with the Green Line as opposed to the Biblical Land. Post-Zionism focuses on the present and the future, whereas Neo-Zionism draws from the deep past. Importantly, Post-Zionism aspires to be universalistic, towards “normalization,” whereas Neo-Zionism is particularistic and espouses such terms as the “chosen people.” For Ram, Post-Zionism is the practical, progressive alternative to Neo-Zionism’s fundamentalist/messianic orientation (335).

Post-Zionism is also the paradigm through which the “contestant” voices of Israel’s “others” may be heard. Ram identifies these “contestants” in his list of Israel’s “Collective Identities” (335). These include Palestinians, the right-wing, Mizrahi Jews, the orthodox, and women, as well as those Jews and liberals who in one way or another do not identify with the categories Ram identifies with early Zionists: Ashkenazi, secular, and male, among other things (335). While Ram asserts that Post-Zionism is inclusive and opens up to the under-recognized

categories above, it is important to note that Oz, Yehoshua, and Grossman all still fall rather comfortably into the very categories that Ram sees as the limiting standard labels of Zionism.

Despite the authors' backgrounds, they do in fact attempt to give voice to the "sub-narratives" Ram discusses as he explores Post-Zionism as an opportunity for marginalized groups to "articulat[e] their own versions of history" (335). Grossman's novel is told entirely from a mother's perspective. Oz and Yehoshua both weave feminine voices into their work. Yehoshua carefully constructs characters that are Arab, Muslim, Christian, Orthodox, and Secular, even tackling multiple generations. Although his protagonist fits stereotypical credentials for Zionist citizenship, Yehoshua's work confronts the main character with almost every other conceivable perspective. The authors cannot fully represent some of the perspectives that their narratives take on given their backgrounds, and the authors' characters are ultimately influenced by the authors' own hegemonic positions. Their work represents a recognition that the dominant Zionist narratives outlined above no longer reflect the stories of the majority, and it is from this perspective that we will describe their works as reflecting notions of Post-Zionism.

Ram himself identifies Yehoshua, in his *Across the Forests* (1959), as an author of literature that "stand[s] for an important and constantly growing body of artistic expressions that delve into the silenced past of 1948, and sometimes, when looking for Hebrew 'roots,' discover[s] Palestinian ones" (107). Though this early work features "iconic stereotypes" of Jews and Arabs, it takes a step on a literary path that Yehoshua and his contemporaries will continue to walk into the next millennium. Yehoshua's Jew as a "diaspora character" (106), is one of many examples that prove that these authors do not dismiss Jewish or Zionist history in their visions of Post-Zionism, and in fact that the recognition of this history is imperative for confronting and contending with traditional tenets of Zionism today.

Ram notes that Yehoshua's version of Post-Zionism as articulated in his essay "In Praise of Normalcy" is post-ideological, meaning that it recognizes Zionism as having become redundant after the establishment of the State of Israel. Ram claims that this is perhaps "the most Zionist approach to Post-Zionism" (119). This classification is a relatively useful one in discussing Israel's big three, since as the "most Zionist approach," it falls somewhere close to the middle of the road in the Neo-Zionism Post-Zionism continuum, like its literary manifestations in Yehoshua, Grossman, and Oz's work, but the authors do more than simply realize that Zionism has accomplished its goal. Their work problematizes Zionism, and offers a subtle revision of Zionism for a kind Post-Zionist citizenship, a revision that deviates from extreme language and contentious debate and acknowledges and embraces the palimpsest of perspectives in Israel, which include, but are not limited to, the historical Jewish experience.

The Post-Zionism in the work of the big three does not deny or dismiss the persecution that lead to the current state, and even recognizes the importance of its establishment as a response to the atrocities their parents' generation faced. The authors do, however, explore alternative "national" stories, and ultimately write a Post-Zionist landscape that recognizes where time has brought the State. Readers are left to reevaluate Zionist approaches to citizenship within the nation, and more importantly, identity and its connection to the land.

Post-Zionism in Texts

For A. B. Yehoshua, it is a matter of challenging the popular understanding of what an Arab is in Israel and the Palestinian territories. In his novel *The Liberated Bride*, he complicates his protagonist's relationship with Arabs as an Orientalist who studies them and as a man who is in perpetual, skeptical awe of them. Yehoshua's literary choices, for example, his marital tropes or his protagonists' ironic observations about the interdependence of Jews and Arabs, confound

clear constructions of identity. His landscapes, too, are carefully drawn to blur the borders that have come with Zionism and force readers to question who in fact is an Israeli and where Israeli identity begins and ends. This section of my thesis explores the way Yehoshua intentionally blurs borders and identities among his Arab, Israeli, Christian, Muslim, and Jewish characters, between historical Zionist depictions of enemies and lovers.

In Oz's 2002 memoir, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, questions arise about the Israeli kibbutz movement, and its attempt to extricate the Israeli pioneer from his Jewish ancestors in the shtetls of Europe even as the European Jewish identity follows immigrants into the Holy Land. As he explores the difference between the Israeli reality and the ideals associated with it, physical and philosophical, he opens up his readers to his personal development, to the way his understanding of Israel's place in the world at large changed over time. His work explores, among other things, what Jews have carried with them from Europe and the evolution of the New Hebrew identity as a "pioneer" on reclaimed land. This section of my thesis explores Oz's challenges to this New Hebrew identity and attempts to articulate why this early ideal of Zionism is replaced by a more muddled representation of Jewry, arguing that Oz is attempting to remind readers of a past to redraw the future definition of "Israeli."

Critics have described Grossman's *To the End of the Land* as "the closest thing to an antiwar novel that has ever been written [in Israel],"³ as its pages challenge the reader's perception that the Israeli Defense Forces are a source of masculinity and pride in an Israeli life. Significantly, too, the perspective of the male is abandoned for this work, and a woman, a mother, given a voice in this Post-Zionist account of what happens when a loved one is lost to or drastically changed by war in the IDF. I take on Grossman's recurring metaphors in this novel,

³ YNET (Israel)

specifically his extensive descriptions of the mother as a soldier and the country as an enemy, and examine the different relationships with the IDF that Grossman depicts as well as the different relationship to Israel as a country and a home, and of man *and* woman to land.

Along a spectrum of Post-Zionist political stances, it is worth noting that A.B. Yehoshua and David Grossman represent two ends, with Oz falling somewhere by Grossman in my reading. Critics describe Grossman, for example, as an author who “has made an important effort to describe for his fellow Israelis the oppressive effects of Zionist discourse and practices on Palestinians” to let his Jewish reader feel “what it feels like to be a Palestinian inside and outside of Israel and to “revea[l] the effects of practices that Jewish Israelis have come to accept as necessary and legitimate” (Shammas and Habiby, 128). Yehoshua, on the other hand, is famous for “essentialistic” views about Israeli citizenship as being inseparably connected with Jewishness, as evidenced by his fraught debates with Arab Israeli writer Anton Shammas (141). *The Liberated Bride*, despite the author’s professed politics, does still fall into a Post-Zionist framework in the ways outlined above and below, and ultimately, though I am not attempting to make a connection between the authors’ “real world” stances and representations of a Post-Zionist reality in their work, it is worth noting that Yehoshua is still considered to be politically “moderate-liberal” (Hever, 201).

All three authors offer different versions of a Post-Zionist narrative that accounts for Israel’s evolving understanding of itself as a state and of itself in relationship to the rest of the world. Ultimately, all offer new visions of the personal relationship to land. Institutions that are unique to Israel are increasingly examined and questioned, and what results is an Israel that is still meaningful to the secular individual, but an Israel with a complicated reality he or she cannot escape from, even in art. With this in mind, I would like to conclude by hazarding new

definitions of the term “Israeli” as well as new “goals” for the State as understood by the challenges these authors present to their Israeli and international audience.

Said insists that

In juxtaposing experiences with each other, in letting them play off each other, it is [his] interpretative political aim ... to make concurrent those views and experiences that are ideologically and culturally closed to each other and that attempt to distance or suppress other views and experiences. Far from seeking to reduce the significance of ideology, the exposure and dramatization of discrepancy highlights its cultural importance; this enables us to appreciate its power and understand its continuing influence. 33

This is in many ways what Grossman, Oz, and Yehoshua accomplish in their work, revealing ideology in contrasting character subject positions, highlighting Zionist ideology itself and problematizing it deeply through its inability to contain the sentiments and identities of the characters, the language of the scripts, and the action on the stages of the stories.

Identity: The New Hebrew, the Israeli, and Alternative Voices

Oz's New Hebrew

For Eran Kaplan, the identity Oz takes on in his memoir, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, responds to the changing demographics of Israeli society, one in which secular Ashkenazim are no longer the dominant ideological voice. Kaplan describes Amos Oz's established position as a national writer, noting that over the years Oz has come “to represent, both in his writings and in his public persona, the quintessential Sabra: the native born Israeli,” and especially after his move from Jerusalem to Hulda, the “proud kibbutznik holding a plow in one hand and a pen in

the other” (119). Kaplan argues, though, that in the memoir, Oz destabilizes this identity and instead presents himself as “an Ashkenazi Jew who seems to be haunted by the complexes and fears that his parents and grandparents brought with them from the Diaspora.” In the memoir, Oz eschews the “grand national narrative,” adding “fuel” to the Post-Zionist fire: he is “the ideal sabra deconstructing the ideal sabra” (121).

Anna Bernard also links Oz’s personal story to the story of the nation, explaining that in works like Oz’s, the partition of the Israeli state (and its aftermath) parallels the personal story, and specifically in Oz’s case, the disillusionment accompanying his coming of age within the Zionist project create a memoir in which “the young Oz’s entry into adulthood is marked not just by his mother’s death, but also by ‘the death of the socialist Zionist dream of a just society’ (Leonard n. pag.)” (18). Bernard’s ultimate claim about Oz’s use of the partition is that it “simultaneously signifies the realization and the negation of the fantasy of total separation, as it becomes almost immediately clear that partition has not ended the Palestinian and Arab resistance to Zionism” (18).

It is not, however, simply the “negation of the fantasy” of Zionism and the “death of the...dream” that Oz is illustrating in his memoir. Oz is identifying limitations and offering *alternative* paradigms through his coming of age. There is, as Kaplan notes, a taking apart of the grand national narrative, but I move beyond attributing this to the death of Zionism and increasing diversity of the Israeli demographic and make connections to what I see as Oz’s writing of a Post-Zionist citizenship. Oz doesn’t simply expose the ironies of the New Hebrew. He creates, through the memoir, a template for a New Israeli. Oz writes an Israeli landscape where demographics are complicated and through his memoir, Zionist notions of citizenship are explored and ultimately revised to include the formerly marginalized voices (and the

accompanying perspectives) to which Kaplan alludes.

Initially, Oz's sense of Jewish and Israeli identity is observed through his father. "Whenever my father found himself facing a pioneer in khaki, a revolutionary, an intellectual turned worker," Oz writes, "he was thoroughly confused" (15-16). For Oz, early notions of the New Hebrew confounded the traditional Jewry brought to Israel with the Europeans. At the same time, the New Hebrew was an aspiration. Oz notes that

like so many Zionist Jews of our time, my father was a bit of a closet Canaanite. He was embarrassed by the shtetl and everything in it, and by its representatives in modern writing, Bialik and Agnon. He wanted us all to be born anew, as blond-haired, muscular, suntanned Hebrew Europeans instead of Jewish Eastern Europeans. 37

Though confused in the face of the New Hebrew, Oz's father, and the young Oz himself, saw the necessity of transforming, as a people, into this Zionist identity in order to bring Jews out of their persecuted past and into a proactive present.

In another childhood moment, Oz imagines the New Hebrew, interestingly, during a visit to the Arab Silwani family, and it is here, while climbing a tree, that the young Oz describes this identity.

For sixty generations, so we had learned, they had considered us a miserable nation of huddled yeshiva students, flimsy moths who start in panic at every shadow, *awlad al-mawt*, children of death, and now at least here was a muscular Judaism taking the stage, the resplendent new Hebrew youth at the height of his powers, making everyone who sees him tremble at his roar: like a lion among lions. 327

The New Hebrew is for Oz not just the immigrant's imagined reaction to historical perceptions of Jewish weakness, but also a real attempted departure from the former way of life,

“cured from Diaspora mentality and...persecution complexes...through hard work in the fields” (392). Oz, though, has not yet been to these fields at this point, and his enactment is doomed to failure. The show of strength ends in disaster as Oz inadvertently hurts the Arab child of the family his father is visiting.

The combination of inherited identities is here accompanied by outside, specifically Arab, perceptions of Jewry, underscored as Oz includes and translates the Arabic in this text. No longer simply a Europe-induced identity crisis, Oz here brings the relationship with Arab neighbors into focus from the very earliest moments of his - and the country's - life. The doomed precociousness of the New Hebrew establishes space for Oz's revisions after he finally starts to work the fields after moving to Kibbutz Hulda to live the pioneer life and to begin to understand this secular Jewishness of the New Hebrew.

Yehoshua's "New Israeli"

As Oz's novel considers and revises the New Hebrew, Yehousha's steps out of the European legacy of Jewishness and into modern ambiguities of Israeliness, expanding the scope of inherited identities and idealized embodiments of Israeliness. His novel, *The Liberated Bride*, destabilizes partition and precludes a reading of a national narrative onto the eclectic landscape he writes, which he peoples with characters that run the gamut of possible identities available in Israel today. Said emphasizes

how oddly hybrid historical and cultural experiences are, of how they partake of many often contradictory experiences and domains, cross national boundaries, defy ...dogma and...patriotism. Far from being unitary or monolithic or autonomous things, cultures actually assume more “foreign” elements, alterities, differences, than they consciously exclude. 15

Yehoshua's characters, within themselves and among each other, assert this hybridity and the inability to extract the "foreign" from the culture. The Zionist definition of an Israeli citizen is called into question through the marriages that the novel revolves around. Yehoshua's intentionally vague title leads readers to consider all the brides of the book, which run the gamut of political and ethnic identities, and to ask themselves which is liberated and from what? Rather than employing a marriage trope that would reestablish and emphasize the perceived Zionist stability of identity by having, for example, a star-crossed romance between an Israeli and a Palestinian, Yehoshua bypasses well-worn polarities and complicates definitions of Israeli, Arab, Palestinian, spouse, lover, friend, enemy, and even family.

The novel opens with the Rivlins preparing to attend "a village wedding." Professor Rivlin is conflicted about attending, but significantly, it is not his student's Arab identity or the location that troubles him. He laments, instead, his own son's failed relationship, and weddings in general exacerbate his despair. When his wife challenges him to explain why he insists on attending the wedding, knowing the emotional toll it will take, Rivlin responds, "But they're Arabs," (3). "'As opposed to what?' she had wanted to know, 'Human beings?'"(3). "'On the contrary...on the contrary,'" Rivlin repeats twice, and so Yehoshua sets the stage for the series of ironic interdependencies that characterize the relationships among the various religious, national, and cultural identities in his novel (3).

Throughout the text, Yehoshua's protagonist asks questions suggesting the indispensability of the Arabs in Israel. "Who would be left to rise early in the Jewish state," Rivlin asks himself on a late car ride home, in which he sees lights in the villages on his way, "if the Arabs, too, had begun to burn the midnight oil?"(11). Rather than adhering to traditional Zionist tropes of the self-sufficient Hebrew, Yehoshua depicts an internal insecurity when Rivlin

is confronted with an inactive Arab population. And yet, when he ends the evening and parts from his colleague, Ephraim Akri, “they [part] with unaccustomed warmth, as if an evening spent among Arabs had reawakened their sense of Jewish solidarity” (11). Yehoshua, ironically the most right-leaning of the three politically, best renders the paradox of Jewish solidarity as it can exist alongside another, broader solidarity with Arab neighbors.

As a character, Akri embodies two stereotypical extremes. Seemingly incompatible, these together make up a portrait underlining what Yehoshua sees as the paradoxical identities that can overlap in a post-national reality. Akri is described as a

swarthy Orientalist who, though forced by religious scruples proclaimed by the skullcap he wore to forage carefully through the little plates in search of kosher morsels, was so full of high spirits that he demanded – whether as a gesture to his hosts or as a boast of his own fluency – that even his Jewish colleagues speak to him only in Arabic. 5

During the evening Akri brings up his take on the Arabs’

problem, namely, that ever since the Arab world had been conquered by the Ottomans in the sixteenth century, Arab intellectuals had failed to confront the inner dysfunction of their society...Not that [Akri] had an aversion to Arabs. He felt no contempt or disdain for them. He simply had arrived at what he believed to be a scholarly conclusion: that they could never understand – let alone respect, desire, or implement – the idea of freedom. This was a theory, which Akri supported with an odd and astonishing assortment of facts morbidly assembled from the gamut of Arab history, that Rivlin firmly rejected. 10

Omer-Sherman makes note of Akri's decidedly "us" vs. "them" take on the situation (61), and I contend moreover that this comprises another exercise in irony. Here Yehoshua shows his readers the way that Zionist frameworks for categorizing people do not, in fact, match up with complex individual identities, even of those who espouse such views.

Akri defends his impromptu wedding lecture when Rivlin points out his faux pas back on campus grounds. "'But that's precisely the place for it!' He claims, 'On their own turf, where they feel most at home, surrounded by their favorite foods, totally connected to themselves and to their land.... Didn't our rabbis say that a table without words of wisdom is no better than a pagan altar?'" (27). Akri, of course, misses the paradox he unfurls as he both explores the Arabs' connection to their land and invokes the wisdom of the Jews to suggest that they belong at the same table... "'Words of wisdom?'" Rivlin counters (27).

You demolished their past, you defamed their ancestors, you attacked their honor, you enumerated their every weakness, you told them they have no future. Do you really think they're a merrily self-flagellating band of masochists like us Jews? 27

What Rivlin tells Akri could be read, broadly, as Palestinian perspective of the Jewish presence in Palestine in general. Rivlin asks to what extent the Palestinians assess their history the way the Jews do, and seems here to have assumed something about Jewishness and reflection. The humor in the question, though, underscores the stereotype, and universalizes the underlying claim that no group would stand for the kind of characterization of their people that Akri dished out to his Arab hosts. The statement Rivlin makes unifies Jew and Arab under a broader Post-Zionist acknowledgement that both sides have been wronged at some point in history, by each other, by the world at large.

Tedeschi, Rivlin's beloved old mentor, echoes Akri in that he describes an Arab history that repeats itself with an emphasis on violence, failure, and a unified "Arab identity." He comments on his own academic work in orientalism, claiming that in his old age, "' the Arabs have driven [him] to despair," going on to ask Rivlin how he can "write with any sympathy about the Algerian freedom fighters of the nineteen forties and fifties when [he] see[s] the terrible carnage going on there now? It's insane, the terror they've let loose" (35). Yehoshua places these antiquated ideas of unification in his elderly scholars to later juxtapose them with the younger generation's understanding, which is infused with Post-Zionism and a global perspective.

Interestingly, then, the young Arab student Samaher offers perhaps the most succinct and straightforward expression of Yehoshua's Post-Zionism. As the scholar describes the way she transmits beliefs and understandings between the several worlds that she lives in as a young Arab woman in Israel, she attempts to persuade Rivlin that she understands his side. "'You're not wrong,'" She begins, adding, "'I not only explain why you're angry, I tell them you're right.'" Looking for Rivlin's reaction, Samaher "studie[s] his face and add[s] with a smile: 'But so am I.' 'You are?' He marvel[s] bitterly, 'How can you be right, too?'" (6). Yehoshua reveals a generational distinction with his Post-Zionist characters here. Despite Rivlin's tolerance and open-mindedness, he is only frustrated by the ironies that confront him as he searches for one particular truth or for concrete definitions of identity, of right and wrong in this situation. Samaher, who embodies through her age, ethnic background, gender, and scholarship so many paradoxes, represents the impossibility of these concrete categorizations.

Yehoshua offers an exceptionally clear and straightforward take on the Israeli identity's next steps as what Shvartz describes as a shift from "collective to individual" consciousness

occurs in an increasingly globalized, Post-Zionist Israel. His “prescription” for the betterment of Israel confounds right wing critiques of Post-Zionism in that it *does* seek traditional Judaism as a starting point for Israel’s “solutions,” but it is unmistakably Post-Zionist in that the emphasis is on the philosophy of Judaism’s “deep history” rather than the nation and its ends.

Rivlin’s brother-in-law, Yo’el explains how an evolving Israeli Jewish identity could work for global change, “I’m not nostalgic about Judaism, I’m perfectly realistic” he begins, separating himself from Neo-Zionist stances on traditional Judaism as the ideal (468). “I have no illusions that what’s written in these books has any answer for the suffering and the hardship that I see all the time. I’m talking about something different” (468). As his work has lead him all over the world, Yo’el is the one character that has seen opportunities, outside of the immediate opportunity in the conflict between Israelis and Arabs, in which one could use Jewish philosophy to work through social and political issues. Yo’el avoids stereotyping the philosophies of peoples in conflict, as, for example, Tedeschi, Akri and Rivlin have done thus far, using those philosophies only to explain conflict into inevitability. Instead, Yo’el sees a chance to bring back an old philosophy to people’s aid.

“Not the content but the template,” of Jewish texts, he clarifies,

– a style of thought such as you find in a wonderful, if sometimes wearisome, book like Agnon’s *The Bridal Canopy*, which I read last year.... It gave me more insight into the Third World than no end of documents. That’s what I’m looking for: a template that Israel – and you know how I am attached to it – has lost. 468

The Bridal Canopy, published in 1931, reflects a pre-State, European Judaism, a Jewishness that was separated from the current political preoccupations and steeped in answering

questions of everyday life through interpretation and application of Jewish texts. Rivlin asks for clarification, to which Yoel specifies that ““It should be possible to combine the Jewish genius for ahistorical abstraction with Israel’s scientific accomplishments – with the curiosity, the collective solidarity, the ability to improvise, that so many Israelis have...”” (469).

If Yehoshua’s work is to run the gamut of political and religious identities available in Israel in order to present us with a Post-Zionist demographic reality, Yoel’s character embodies still one more “way of being” in Israel. If Samaher represents a Post-Zionist view that is inclusive of multiple takes on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, Yoel’s offers a slightly different Post-Zionist view that asks of Israel to look outward, into the WorldAtLarge, as Oz would call it, and apply lessons learned.

Yoel offers, too, some global perspective, reminding Rivlin of “the problems of other peoples. Real ones of hunger and civil war and terrible natural disasters” (469). He admonishes Israeli impatience, “as if the only point of comparison with their situation were the tranquility of Europe – as if Europe itself hadn’t been within living memory the site of the most horrible of atrocities, not to mention what just happened in Bosnia...”” (469). It is significant, though, that Yoel’s global perspective of Jewish thought and its potential uses is (inevitably?) coupled with his residence outside of the State. Yehoshua seems to suggest here that harnessing “Jewish thought” for social justice is only yet possible when it’s not about “the enemy,” and that within the local conflict, it can veer dangerously into the exclusivity and exceptionalism of Neo-Zionist politics. Unlike Oz, then, Yehoshua doesn’t offer a reader a revision of Post-Zionist citizenship, but presents the reader with demographics that challenge Zionist convention, and, importantly, underscore the ironies and conflicts of ideology that come about in the Post-Zionist reality of Israel.

Grossman's Alternative Voices

Post-Zionist identities are always plural and always overlapping. Oz and Yehoshua integrate and overlap a number of different Jewish and Arab perspectives, but their main characters remain Ashkenazi males who, while they question tenets of Zionism they have grown up with, remain part of its dominant demographic. Grossman veers from this point of view. Though some of his earlier novels have had female protagonists, it is significant that Grossman's main character is mother of a soldier in this Post-Zionist work, and that this mother deviates from the Zionist script of support for the efforts of the IDF. Shiffman describes an important paradox characterizing "mothers" in Grossman's work from the 90s, which illuminates his Post-Zionist strategies in *To the End of the Land*. She describes mothers on the Israeli ground as being "formed under conditions of permanent military and existential tensions," and notes that

Israeli Jewish Mothers, and the cultural institution of Motherhood, tend to paradoxically combine two contradictory aspects: on the one hand, the Mother is the familiar, well known Jewish Mother, nurturing, caring, self-effacing and adoring; on the other hand, Israeli Jewish Mothers are harnessed to the national effort. 139

The Post-Zionist shift goes beyond presenting the paradox to the reader. It blurs the boundaries. Shiffman acknowledges that Grossman makes of motherhood an "institution ostensibly belonging to the 'private' sphere of life, as dictated by and constructed in the 'public' domain," but by the time of his writing of *To the End*, there is a firm assertion on the part of his mother character, Ora, that the private and the public overlap completely, that a Post-Zionist motherhood may in fact struggle against the dictates and constructs of the public domain, her children becoming her unwilling contributions.

Shiffman cites Boyarin and Gluzman, and could probably also cite Oz's memoir, to contrast between the "mainly... 'Manly' nature of Zionism and the perseverance of the stereotypical historical Jewish mother. "The 'New Jew,'" or New Hebrew, as Oz would put it, "was to be a new man... In contrast, the Zionist Mother was, indeed, neither new, nor surprising" (143). The Post-Zionist Mother, may not be "new" in the sense that she is still doting and perhaps viewed by her sons and husband as overbearing, but she is probably surprising in her unabashed critique of Zionism's most masculine stage: the IDF. She embodies an "army identity" that is interested not in the protection of the public nation but of the private home. Grossman's readers enter Ora's thoughts during an IDF soldiers' meet-up she goes to with her son, before he leaves for war.

It is all a huge, irredeemable mistake. It seems to her that as the moment of separation approaches, the families and the soldiers fill with arid merriment, as if they have all inhaled a drug meant to dull their comprehension. The air bustles with the hum of a school trip or a big family excursion. Men her age, exempt from reserve duty, meet their friends from the army, the fathers of the young soldiers, and exchange laughter and backslaps. 'We've done our part,' two stout men tell each other, 'now it's their turn.' 63-4.

The meet-up is depicted as a sort of extension of family; the war is likened to a field trip. "Screeching loudspeakers direct the soldiers to their battalions' meeting points – a *meeter*, they call this, and she thinks in her mother's voice: barbarians, language-rapists..." (64). Significantly, Ora's mother's voice uses rhetoric echoing that of war propaganda itself, but this time, she uses it to describe the army that she is meant to understand as defending her right to live in Israel. Her

mother's voice sounds here and in other passages readier for combat than that of the soldiers themselves, who sound more like mothers observing the passage of generations.

Grossman juxtaposes in this and in other passages the language of war and of elements of childhood at the same time that he weaves in war metaphors to describe Ora's perception of her role as a mother. The former, for example, is evident in a moment when Ora observes Ofer explaining his position at a checkpoint. "But, Dad, that's my job!" Ofer insists, "I stand there precisely so they'll blow themselves up on me and not in Tel Aviv" (441). After describing his simple metal detector, he asks incredulously, "what did you think I had?" and insists "but didn't you wonder how it's done there?" Ora hears "a note of childish disappointment in his voice" (51), and eventually this critique is vocalized in a moment of frustration when Ora "spat back at him that she still wasn't convinced that the male brain could tell the difference between war and games" (65). By writing from Ora's unique perspective of a woman and a mother, Grossman's narrative can become a distanced but emotionally involved critique not just of the war but also its participants: Ofer is after all still her child.

In the middle of the prose, Ofer interrupts her thoughts, asking her angrily how she could think to have Sami, their Arab driver, bring them to the meet-up that day. "What if they find an Arab here and think he's come to commit suicide? And didn't you think about how he feels having to drive me here? Do you even get what this means for him?" Ofer asks indignantly (64). This from the same son who had just explained to Ora over lunch that "they had to come down on [the Arabs] once and for all" (58). Grossman, like Yehosha, manages to position Jewish solidarity alongside a fragile solidarity with Arab friends, but he confronts readers with it through the immediacy of the situation of inevitable conflict. Here, perhaps most apparently, the Post-Zionist position is articulated. Ofer is capable, despite his commitment to serve the country

and his decision to volunteer to go to war, of understanding Sami's position, and even offers his voice to describe it. Grossman's narrative does not allow readers to muse about interdependency the way that Yehoshua's does. A side must be picked. And while Ofer is cast in and ultimately takes on the role of the soldier, Ora, increasingly, picks the Post-Zionist side of life over land.

Using maternal identity allows Grossman to trace Ofer's understanding of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict through childhood to his position as a soldier at the narrative's present. Ora remembers how the young Ofer "woke up with a conclusion and a solution: from now on he would be English "'Cause no one kills *them*...and they don't have any enemies" (376). Grossman confronts readers here with the seeds of the soldier's mentality, the origins in fear, the early ways in which Israeli subjectivity is understood through comparable national identities. The naïve suggestion, too, that identity can be easily chosen, is set up tragically against the reality that Ofer has no choice but to serve the country he was born in later in life.

Ofer may not have agency in terms of his national identity as a soldier, but Grossman repeatedly adds a dimension of agency, ironically, to Ora, and does so with the language of the military and of war. Ora's memories travel further back in time, to Ofer's first months.

I used to wonder how I would get through another hour with him when he was running a high fever and screaming in my ear, and it was two o'clock in the morning and the doctor wouldn't pick up the phone, but at the same time – I could do anything! I could carry him by my teeth to the farthest corners of the earth. *Terrible as an army with banners*. 204

The italics, interestingly, are Grossman's. The phrase comes from the Song of Solomon, and the King James Bible translates the original Hebrew phrasing as "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"

(Song of Solomon 6:10). The original, then, adds the military simile to describe feminine beauty, though Grossman's version describes a mother's capacity in defense of her children. The simile sits closer to its literal meaning, and the stereotypical Jewish mother has a (Post-) Zionist bent not towards the defense of the State but of her own progeny.

Ofer's involvement in the IDF, moreover, is at times characterized as betrayal. Ora remembers Ofer's last minute decision to volunteer for the operation as "treachery," but the even greater treachery, and an intolerable foreignness resided in his ability to be such a soldier-going-to-war, so able to do his job...thereby imposing a role upon her: to be wrinkled and gray, yet glowing with pride...blinking with ignorant charm at the men's stance in the face of death" 74.

Once Ofer takes on the role of a soldier, he becomes part of the oppressive state that Ora sees as her enemy, and he also becomes "foreign," changing his identity and Ora's, turning her into a helpless part of the process. The mother/son relationship becomes a micro-war, and Ora's sense of Ofer's danger is heightened the more he identifies with the nation they live in. Her identity is formed by his act and her complacency, and she is "surprised to discover" that she is now "one of those mothers who sends her sons to battle," an identity she has not chosen but which has been conferred (80).

Ora believes that the only way for Ofer to come out from his service unscathed is for him not to actively take part – not to hurt anyone, even when he must obey orders to do so. And so when Ofer insists on going to war, she runs away. As she sits and readies herself for the journey ahead "she silently explains that she might be a little insane at the moment, but in this wrestling match between her and the notifiers," who will inevitably come to bring news of Ofer's death,

“she must go all the way...so she won’t feel afterward that she gave in without even a flicker” (95).

And therefore, when they come to inform her, she will not be here. The parcel will be returned to sender, the wheel will stop for an instant, and it may even have to reverse a little, a centimeter or two, no more. Of course the notice will be dispatched again immediately – she has no illusions. They won’t give up, they cannot lose this battle, because their surrender, even to just one woman, would mean the collapse of the entire system... But at least for a few days she will fight... 95.

In the midst of this mental justification, continuing with the language of war, she wonders to herself, “where would we be if other families adopted the idea and also refused to receive notice of their loved ones’ deaths?” (95). She never questions whether the deaths could stop, whether there can be true, military-free peace – war has been the reality since the opening lines of the book, which take place in 1967. Rather, Ora wonders about the recognition, the glorification of the loss, as if it is a part of what allows wars in Israel to continue. Where would Israelis be if families put a stop to the cycle that conferred nationalistic identities onto the people via their losses to the military system, Grossman asks?

Grossman not only sets Ora up as an army, her defense of her son as a sort of internal war. He delineates an ironic enemy: as the text progresses Ora appears caught between the “fight” for her son against the overpowering Israeli nation. Grossman presents us, for example, with a moment of Ora chopping her salad and chopping, metaphorically, all of the names that trouble her.

“Feverishly brandishing the knife,” as if it were a sword, “she finely chops up Khan Yunis and Shekh Munis, Deir Yassin and Sheikh Yassin... All they bring is trouble... and with a sudden revelation she also throws Golda and Begin and Shamir and Sharon and Bibi and Barak and Rabin, and Shimon Peres too – after all, don’t they have blood on their hands?... All those people who razed her life, who keep nationalizing another one of her children every second... 531

And in a moment of irony not unlike Yehoshua’s the episode reaches its conclusion as she sets down the bowl in front of her son. “Here you go , Ofer’ke. An Arabic salad, just the way you like it” (531). Her nationalized son, who loves Arabic salads is in so many ways a complicated product of all the things, literally and metaphorically, that his mother has tried to chop to bits.

The convolution of the mother and son dynamic is underscored by another “identity,” this time that intrusive army, and ultimately the callous soldier known as the State of Israel.

A memory flashed in her mind. The same cold burn of terror and failure from almost thirty years ago, when they took Avram from her, when they nationalized her life. She felt the same old story again: this country, with its iron boot, had once again landed a thundering foot in a place where the state should not be. 535

For Ora, the State has certain borders, certain places in which it should not intervene. This overlapping of the personal and the national, this repeated and intentional blurring of the idea of “national identity,” ultimately comes out through Ofer’s final instructions as he leaves for war. All three authors ask about the relationship of the Israeli to the land, Grossman’s question, discussed below, pushing even Post-Zionism to its Post-National brink.

By attempting to write in a woman's voice, Grossman extends the scope of "actors" in Israel's wars in important ways. The distance established by the female perspective allows the tone to be critical, but the overlap of war related language and metaphors simultaneously negates that distance and confronts readers with the war's permeation into the personal and into the familial. A male parent as the main character would also have potentially been in combat himself and would have been able, like the character of Avram, to critique the IDF through his traumatic experiences, but Grossman appears to want to stretch the boundaries of "trauma" in war and expose its effects on those who are not called to the battle field.

There are, of course, limitations for Grossman, a male writer attempting to render the female perspective. He may never fully access war and loss from the female perspective, but it appears that the ends are achieved regardless: Grossman can successfully blur boundaries of the male and female domain and problematize the operations of the IDF. Even as Ora is bewildered by the male perspective on war and power, she is engulfed in the conflict in ways that Zionism does not account for, and she marks the absurdity of her prescribed "Zionist" roles throughout the text. The Post-Zionist paradigm comes through not necessarily in the accurate portrayal of the "other's" voice, in this case, but in the attempt, which reminds readers about the varied stakeholders of the conflict and the trauma that extends beyond this distinct institution and confuses the binaries upon which Zionism operated.

Land: Pioneers, Borders, and the Crust of the Earth

Oz and the Kibbutz Setting

As Hannah Boast argues, "the [Israeli-Palestinian] conflict is...about the ways in which land is imagined, and the sense of national belonging produced" (46). Through an understated,

metaphor-laced personal and familial account that follows immigration from Europe through the establishment of the modern state of Israel, Oz reveals both the priorities and problems of realizing the Zionist project in Israel. Oz does not invite readers to take a particular stand. Rather, he brings to light some of the gaps of the Zionist framework within which he came of age, as well as his personal responses, to subtly offers revisions of Zionist land and development paradigms. For Oz, the kibbutz setting is the scene for Post-Zionist revisions to the New Hebrew.

Mendelson-Maoz describes a model, “following Homi Bhabha’s distinction between the pedagogical and the performative and the idea of heterotopy in Foucault’s writing,” through which to understand Oz’s *A Tale of Love and Darkness* as one of an increasing number of “narratives of immigration” that oscillate between the idealized Zionist vision of “aliya” from Europe to the Holy Land and the de-romanticized reality of immigration to Palestine/Israel. She writes that “Oz’s identity [in the memoir] provides a fragile opportunity for harmony between [the pedagogical-utopian narrative of aliya and the performative-heterotopian reality of immigration]” as he “breaks down times and spaces to create a multi-vocal experience” (77). Much like it is not simply about the “death of the Zionist dream, it is also not simply “a fragile opportunity for harmony” that is provided. Rather, Oz actually creates a new combination of these categories after his reverse “Copernican revolution.” The performative-heterotopian reality of *Post-Zionism* is utopian in its inclusiveness and its opportunities for coexistence on the land.

Mendelson-Maoz makes useful distinctions between aliya and immigration, which can be mapped on to differences between “place,” which I associate with Aliya, in which there is a dominant narrative regarding the nature of the Holy Land, and “space” which I associate with immigration, and through which immigrants, contending with the realities of the Levant (in the ways that Oz describes both his grandparents and his father doing using cosmic metaphors and

moments of confrontation with the physical landscape) must reimagine this particular place. The distance that the kibbutz offers allows Oz to observe a dialectic between aliya and immigration, and between space and place, and allows Oz to deviate from inherited and problematic Zionist notions of land, citizenship, and development and to ultimately offer his own.

Amos Oz's memoir, then, brings his readers to this life-changing decision to move from Jerusalem to Kibbutz Hulda. This decision exposes his inherited frames and identity, and ultimately allows him to make new claims and redefine an Israeli citizen. Omer-Sherman writes that literary representations of kibbutz life often reflect the way that "the kibbutz continues to serve Israel's literary world as a sort of moral barometer" (154). This becomes all the more appropriate when the renderings of the kibbutz are based on real life, as in Oz's memoir. For Oz, the kibbutz is at once a moral barometer, a laboratory, and a space that isn't quite "place" enough to preclude new memories and definitions from forming. For Oz, the kibbutz environment serves as a physical and mental space for further commentary on the political and environmental priorities of early Zionism and its impact on individual relationships with land. This is the place where those moments reflecting broader social narratives and present throughout the text of the memoir are reworked into Oz's personal Post-Zionist perspective.

Oz attributes his frame shift specifically to his reading of *Winesburg Ohio* by Sherwood Anderson, which occurred shortly after his move.

Whereas Copernicus showed that our world is not the center of the universe but just one planet among others in the solar system, Sherwood Anderson opened my eyes to write about what was around me. Thanks to him I suddenly realized that the written world does not depend on Milan or London but always revolves around the hand that is writing, wherever it happens to be writing: where you are is the center of the universe. 493

Here, the inside-outside binaries and cosmic metaphors separating him from the rest of the world are finally and definitively broken down. The inherited frames are no longer the dominant paradigm through which Oz understands his world. Oz's perception of the New Hebrew, too, is changed.

Oz of course had a clear conception of the kibbutz project and its pioneers, the New Hebrews, which was reinforced by his Zionist upbringing, and he recounts at the very beginning of the book the various conceptions he had of kibbutz life and those who lived it.

Sometimes my friends and I went to the Tnuva delivery yard to watch [the kibbutzniks] arriving from over the hills and far away on a truck laden with agricultural produce, "clad with dust, burdened with arms, and with such heavy boots," and I used to go up to them to inhale the smell of hay, the intoxicating odors of faraway places... That's where the land is being built and the world is being reformed, where a new society is being forged. They are stamping their mark on the landscape and on history, they are plowing fields and planting vineyards, they are writing a new song, they pick up their guns, mount their horses, and shoot back at the Arab marauders... 6

Oz, as a child, associates the kibbutzniks with a faraway place, not unlike the way the World at Large is structured in his childhood memories. He quotes, in this passage, a popular song by the branch of the IDF that was responsible, in those days, for patriotic cultural production, and gestures towards the Zionist cultural construction of kibbutzniks as it impacted his own understanding of their location and their role, and it is in this faraway place that a world is being reformed and Israeli (rather than traditional Jewish) society is being forged. It is significant that the very biblical and very land-based metaphor of clay is used to reveal the land's role in creating the identity of the kibbutz settler, in quite literally forming the identity of the New

Hebrew man. This hints at the way Oz will attempt to reconcile these seemingly opposing constructions of Jewish and Israeli identity.

After his reverse Copernican revolution, then, Oz takes readers closer to the current historical moment where Neo-Zionist concepts of biblical “deep time” and those respective understandings of man and land meet with Post-Zionism’s globalizing awareness, through which relationships to the land are constantly being reevaluated for inclusiveness alongside productivity. Aside from changing his name and moving to Hulda, Oz’s first Post-Zionist revision occurs when he marries Nily. The complex combination of religious and secular schema in this episode is significant, and his “revision” is described as such in the memoir:

It was a fixed tradition in Hulda to support the bridal canopy on two rifles and two pitchforks, symbolizing the union of work, defense, and the kibbutz. Nily and I caused quite a scandal by refusing to marry in the shadow of rifles. In the kibbutz assembly Zalman P. called me a “bleeding heart,” while Tzvi K. inquired mockingly whether the army unit I was serving allowed me to go on patrol armed with a pitchfork or a broom.

479

Oz’s revision gestures toward a Post-Zionist Israeli identity and makes a powerful statement about Neo-Zionism at the same time. Here, he and his wife Nily attempt, despite the opposition he makes note of, to create a new paradigm for the kibbutz. The bridal canopy, a relic of religious Judaism, is still represented: neo-Zionist links to the biblical heritage are not dismissed outright, as critics of Post-Zionism often claim. The canopy in Hulda, however, is normally linked forcefully to the land-based priorities of the Zionists in Israel. The moment becomes a Post-Zionist revision when the guns are abandoned. The couple will work to make the land productive, but they refuse to contend that they would “defend” that land against those who

do not fit in to the Zionist frame.

Oz's memoir provides impressions of other important landscapes as well, and how the changes outside of Israel reflect the situation on the ground. "When my father was a young man in Vilna," Oz writes, "every wall in Europe said, 'Jews go home to Palestine.' Fifty years later, when he went back to Europe on a visit, the walls all screamed, 'Jews get out of Palestine.'" (60). Even as Oz revises his notions of citizenship through landscapes, Oz is sensitive to the politics that have lead him (and everyone involved in the conflict) to the present moment. The Post-Zionist citizenship that I read into his memoir is one that acknowledges, through shifting identities and significant features of landscapes in Israel, and in this case, the WorldAtLarge, the historical causes of Zionist claims. This citizenship, though, also acknowledges the evolution of political sentiments within Israel and abroad, and the juxtaposition of these sentiments as represented by the graffiti on the wall allow Oz to use landscape to support his revisions.

Yehoshua and a Fluid Israeli Border

Yehoshua also uses landscapes to ask questions about the human relationship with land, using his landscapes to mirror the oscillation of loyalties of his main character, Professor Rivlin. Rather than revising citizenship through new attitudes toward the land, Yehoshua's characters sit with a sort of ironic acceptance that the ideals of Zionist citizenship and the realities of landscape are at odds, but somehow still harmonious. Rivlin makes such an observation on the way home from the wedding with which the story opens.

If here, too, Rivlin thought, not for the first time, the Arabs stay up all night partying, who, really, will look after us Jews by day? Not sure how Rashid would respond to such a reflection, however, he watched in silence as the latter excused himself politely and drove as far as the city's last street lamp, whose light fell on a macadam road that had

once been part of a British Mandate highway running the length of Palestine. The bright Israeli man in the moon had now been transformed into a cloud-veiled Palestinian woman ... 215

In a passage typical of these authors, Yehoshua brings together several layers that have contributed to the blurred identities of his characters and of Israelis and Palestinians in the real world as he describes the landscape of the modern state. He mentions Arab villages, the lingering remnants of the British empire, and the natural skyscape, which oscillates over time among identities of the people beneath it. Moreover, he places his Arabs in an almost maternal role, suggesting once again the interdependence of the Arabs and the Israelis.

From the village wedding forward, Yehoshua consistently situates Samaher and her family in a unified kingdom that Rivlin affectionately describes as “all of Araby.” Samaher and her large extended family live in “their little autonomous kingdom, the borders of which were being drawn, stealthily but steadily, amid the pinkening hills of the Galilee” (4,5). Yehoshua’s language reveals the Jewish perception of the Arab world as a united, regal community which outsiders like Rivlin can only attempt to understand, but Rivlin’s perspective is continually and intentionally undercut, not just by the way the character is invited to and integrated into Arab spaces and Arab life, but also by the scope and variety of Arab identities and Arab conflicts explored in the text, from the battle for French Algeria that make up Rivlin’s latest academic project to the Christian Lebanese nun that intrigues Rivlin and engages the professor’s senses.

Interestingly, Yehoshua places a violent conflict well outside of the Kingdom the night of the wedding, indeed outside of the state of Israel. Rivlin observes at one point during the evening that “the distant boom of an artillery shell fired across the border in Lebanon sounded like part of

the reenacted rite” (5). Here, again, Yehoshua opens up the stage, and challenges his readers to consider that conflict is not only defined by Zionist goals, struggles and borders, but can occur, and matter, in the different worlds surrounding Israel.

Grossman and Israel Itself

While Oz revises the Israeli relationship to land and Yehoshua blurs its boundaries, Grossman brings the assumed necessity of a Jewish presence in Israel into question. It is Ofer who first raises the issue, though readers are not told directly that he has done so, only that Ora is caught off guard by a statement he has made at the meet-up before they part. An old friend, Avram, who is later revealed to be Ofer’s real father, plants the seeds of the question in a memory Ora has of a drive they took not long after his experience as a prisoner of war in Egypt in 1973.

“Look at them,” Avram had said to her once, in one of their drives around the streets of Tel Aviv... “ They walk down the street, they talk, they shout, read newspapers, go to the grocery store, sit in cafes...but why do I keep thinking it’s all one big act? That it’s all to convince themselves that this place is truly real?... I don’t think the Americans or the French have to believe so hard all the time just to make America exist. Or France...Those are countries that exist even without having to always *want* them to exist.” 376

Just as Ofer, in forging his identity as a child, decided to be British to avoid war, Avram, too, reminds readers of the relative “ease” of the Western identity and the relative stability of the land attached to it. The Israeli land is one that the Jewish people must *want* to exist, but not only that, the novel emphasizes that this want must be accompanied by action and by loss.

Ora tries to keep Ofer alive through her absence from the home, by breaking the rules of waiting for news and instead losing herself in the Israeli wilderness. Her intuition compels her to keep moving along the Israel trail despite the rational knowledge not being home to receive the soldiers who come with the news that Ofer has fallen will not actually change whether they come or not. Interestingly, the trail offers her an escape from her fated message (thus the Hebrew title *Isha Borachat MiBsora*) but it is also an escape from the State within the State. As Yehoshua's Rivlin travels to other worlds within Israel, so Ora finds another Israel within the Israel of her every day. Stripped of the religious architecture, away from landmarks of controversial political significance, this return to the land is at once a recognized attraction of Israel while it is cut off from precisely the things that typically characterize the State or its history.

Perhaps Grossman can ask the question of the land most directly because of the loss of life in *To the End of the Land*. As life is not simply protected by the Jewish state, but also sacrificed for it, the land's worth is no longer straightforward. On page 74 of his text, Grossman describes Ofer as whispering a disturbing message into Ora's ear before he leaves for the war. It is not until almost 200 pages later that Grossman finally reveals the order, Ofer's final wish. "If I'm killed,' Ofer had whispered, 'leave the country. Just get out of here, there's nothing here for you'" (368). Ofer does not ask, but Grossman still poses a question: is the Zionist dream of the Jewish homeland worth the reality of bloodshed and war?

What is a Post-Zionist Narrative?

The authors' texts, their actors, stages, and scripts are diverse. They are not collaborating with each other to say something; they don't have an overt agenda. What they have in common is the historical moment in which these works were produced, and the incorporation of important

institutions, founded in Zionism, and used in the narratives as sites of diversity, sites of multiple perspectives, dissenting perspectives, characters of diverse backgrounds, and blurred or complex notions of place. The Ashkenazi male hero takes his place alongside Arabs, women, and Jews of other backgrounds, and for significant portions of the narratives, readers are confronted with blurred boundaries or problematized relationships with land. Unlike the narratives of Zionism, which was about a collective, cohesive narrative across multiple authors, a unified and idealized vision of the Jewish homeland, and a strong and masculine New Hebrew, etc, the narratives these three texts comprise are both cohesive in their challenges to the Zionist narrative but also individualized in the way they illustrate those challenges. While the resistance to the Zionist narrative creates unification among these narratives, the greater degree of individualization in these narratives reveals the diversity of viewpoints, the sheer number of alternative narratives that can confront Zionism in literature and beyond. Oz, Grossman, and Yehoshua are reacting against a unified canon, and their characters, their metaphors, and their landscapes, diverse as they are, make up this unified challenge.

Paine writes that

The Jews as a people, are defined by their religion which is distinctive among the world religions in its territorial focus on Eretz Yisrael the Land of Israel. Yet the people themselves... have been deterritorialized through the millennia. Now that they have restored themselves to the primordial territory... the question arises: how are they to behave there? 123.

The authors of these narratives allow readers to rephrase the question, and also its informing definitions. Are Jews – Israelis – defined today by the religion? And if they are secular

citizens of a State, how are they defined? Should we be using the term “citizens” instead of “Jews” to encompass the diversity these texts represent and rephrase this as a Post-Zionist question? Oz, Yehoshua, and Grossman offer several identities in their prose, few of which are centrally religious. Citizenship becomes, through their Post-Zionist depictions, a complicated combination of religion (Jewish, Muslim, Christian), custom, participation in national institutions (like the IDF, the University, or the kibbutz), and simply being in the Holy Land or being connected to some of its residents. But not all of these are given equal status. The religious aspects of citizenship are downplayed, and the IDF seen as a sort of threat. Citizenship is both a combination of inherited and acquired identities but is also related to the commitment to life over land.

In his recent article for the “New Yorker,” David Remnick quotes an exasperated Tzipi Livni describing the views of ascending right wing politician Naftali Bennet, “To be right wing is to be strong, to be left wing is to be weak, appeasing, naïve – and ‘We can’t afford naïveté in this region,’” she claims, mimicking his stance. Strikingly, she concludes, “He is the new Sabra! The new Israeli!” (41). Livni foregrounds the tension, noted above, between today’s Neo-Zionism and Post-Zionism paradigms. Her language is reminiscent of Oz’s New Hebrew, but also of characterizations of writers like Oz by critics like Katz. But Oz’s New Hebrew and Bennet-style New Israelis are different in the connections these identities forge with the land itself. Another unifying factor, then, among the texts, is that Oz, Yehoshua, and Grossman appear to be talking not just about a New Hebrew anymore, but about a New Citizen, and to be sure, they are up against the opposition, who is still invested in the project of the Jewish State. The authors offer no easy answers, but they do reformulate the “problem,” acknowledging the instability of the “Jewishness” of the State from the varied perspectives they portray.

Above, I've outlined the different ways that the authors challenge clear-cut Zionist notions about the land, its borders, and its inhabitants. All the authors trouble the concept of an exclusively Jewish homeland to varying degrees, but Grossman's Ofer, in his advice to his mother Ora, perhaps best reflects the extreme Post-Zionist relationship with Israel, which is that when it ceases to do what it was meant to under Zionism, which is to provide a safe haven for the Jews, it is to be abandoned. Israel has become, by the time Grossman's narrative is over, the site of lush life and deep loss, not unlike Oz's aunt Sonya's metaphorical "black holes" of loss in Europe as they are juxtaposed with the verdant landscapes of her and Oz's mother's childhood. As long as Europe remains the WorldAtLarge, though, the loss is distant enough and the land still meaningful, exceptional. But once the sacrifice for the nation negates the nation's protective promise, the WorldAtLarge infiltrates the land and the Post-Zionist New(er) Hebrew faces the uncomfortable task of reevaluating the physical land's role in her cultural and/or spiritual identity.

Alongside Ofer, Ora's character, Yehoshua's Yoel and Samaher, and Oz's personal revolution all offer this Post-Zionist overlap of acknowledgement of another (or an "other's") perspective alongside a question of what to do with this new knowledge. Only Ofer offers one seemingly impossible solution: leave the land. None of the authors outwardly support this response to new Post-Zionist awareness, and Ora's character is deeply troubled at the prospect, but her final thought of the novel, "How thin is the crust of the Earth" (576), suggests that for Post-Zionism, the land has a different meaning, physically, spiritually, and politically, than it has had in Zionism and than it has for Neo-Zionism, and that the Ashkenazi Zionist male commitment to the land is not shared in the same way by the other inhabitants of this space.

As “opening scenes” in a new stage of Post-Zionist representation, these authors, rather than advocating specific steps forward, establish new norms for narratives, and push back against the Zionist narrative that they grew up with. They reveal important “scenes” for resistance, which both resist the Zionist ideologies that informed their formation, but also become fertile sites for alternative ideas. The authors remain, despite the ever-diversifying population of the land, influential cultural and political voices, and their contributions open the door for more. What comes next? There is room, of course, for studies that read these narratives alongside narratives written by other backgrounds and perspectives, especially Mizrahi and Palestinian writers. An ongoing dialogue and access will allow us to understand what Post-Zionism means for all the actors involved in the Holy Land.

Various texts by these authors have been translated into Arabic and even Farsi, but the multi-directional promotion of a circulation of texts, in and out of Israel, is important. Writers have a role in creating and sustaining other kinds of dialogue with alternative voices, not just in sampling them, to the best of their ability, through their own lenses. The critics who study them, too, have opportunities to explore these texts and contexts from multiple perspectives. Yehoshua’s back and forth with Shammas, important as it is in terms of identifying the assumptions underlying questions of nationality and citizenship, retains the opposing perspectives, which, ironically, are better resolved in the characters of his own work. But academic and popularly acknowledged dialogues that engage Palestinian, Arab, and other writers with an explicit aim towards identifying points of intersection in their perspectives on the Holy Land, like the kind that Oz conducted alongside Palestinian writer Sari Nusseibeh in Berlin in 2010, this is a Post-Zionist dialogue that can bring the actors, stages, and varied perspectives of

the text into a reality of institutions and citizens who can begin to recognize the interdependence, shared tragedy, and shared hope for harmony in a realized Post-Zionist Holy Land.

Works Cited

Bernard, Anna. "Forms of Memory: Partition as a Literary Paradigm." *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 30 (2012): 9-33. Print.

Boast, Hanna. "'Planted Over the Past': Ideology and Ecology in Israel's National Eco-Imaginary." *Green Letters* 1.16 (2012): 46-58. Print.

Fuchs, Esther. *Israeli Mythogynies: Women in Contemporary Hebrew Fiction*. Albany: State University of New York, 1987. Print.

Gelber, Yoav. "Some Basic Issues of the Zionist/Post-Zionist Controversey." *Midstream* May/June (2007): 2-8. Print.

Grossman, David. *To the End of the Land*. Trans. Jessica Cohen. New York: Vintage – Random House, 2010. Print.

Hever, Hannan. "Hebrew in an Israeli Arab Hand." *Postzionism: A Reader*. Ed. Laurence J. Silberstein. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2008. 193-216. Print.

Kaplan, Eran. "Amos Oz's A Tale of Love and Darkness and the Sabra Myth." *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* 14.1 (2007): 119-143. Print.

Katz, Gideon. "Secularism and the Imaginary Polemic of Israeli Intellectuals." *Israel Studies* 13.3 (2008): 43-63. Print.

Mendelson-Maoz, Adia. “Amos Oz’s *A Tale of Love and Darkness* Within the Framework of Immigration Narratives in Modern Hebrew Literature.” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 9.1 (2010): 71-87. Print.

Omer-Sherman, Ranen. “‘A Disgrace to the Map of Israel’: The Wilderness Journey of the Citizen-Soldier in Amos Oz’s *A Perfect Peace*.” *Journal of Modern Literature* 27.3 (2004): 97-114. Print.

---. “‘On the verge of a long-craved intimacy’: Distance and Proximity Between Jewish and Arab Identities in A.B. Yehoshua’s *The Liberated Bride*.” *Journal of Jewish Identities* 2.1 (2009): 55-84. Print.

---. “The Kibbutz and the Disenchanted: Representations in Contemporary Israeli Narratives.” *One Hundred Years of Kibbutz Life: A Century of Crises and Reinvention*. Michal Palgi, and Shulamit Reinharz, ed. One New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2011. Print.

Oz, Amos. *A Tale of Love and Darkness*. Trans. Nicholas de Lange. Orlando: Harcourt, 2004. Print.

Paine, Robert. “Israel: Jewish Identity and Competition over ‘Tradition.’” *History and Ethnicity*. Elizabeth Tonkin, Maryon McDonald, and Malcolm Chapman, eds. London: Routledge, 1989, 121-136. Print.

Ram, Uri. “The State of the Nation: Contemporary Challenges to Zionism in Israel.” *Constellations* 6.3 (1999): 325-338. Print.

Remnick, David. “The Party Faithful: The settlers move to annex the West Bank – and Israeli politics.” *New Yorker* 21 Jan. 2013: 38-49. Print.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf, 1993. Print.

Shiffman, Smadar. "Motherhood Under Zionism." *Hebrew Studies* 44 (2003): 139-156. Print.

Shammas, Anton and Emile Habiby. "Palestinian Critics and Postzionist Discourse." *The Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israeli Culture*. Ed. Laurence J. Silberstein. New York: Routledge, 1999. 127-63. Print.

Yehoshua, A. B. *The Liberated Bride*. Trans. Hillel Halkin. Orlando: Harcourt, 2003. Print.